

The Smithfield Town Council met in Special Session on Thursday, February 24, 2022 at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers of the Smithfield Town Hall, Mayor M. Andy Moore presided.

Councilmen Present:

John A. Dunn, Mayor Pro-Tem  
David Stevens, District 2  
Travis Scott, District 3  
Dr. David Barbour, District 4  
Stephen Rabil, At-Large  
Roger Wood, At-Large

Councilmen Absent

Marlon Lee, District 1

Administrative Staff Present

Michael Scott, Town Manager  
Michael Brown, Fire Chief  
Ted Credle, Public Utilities Director  
Lawrence Davis, Public Works Director  
Gary Johnson, Parks & Rec Director  
Tim Kerigan, Human Resources/PIO  
Shannan Parrish, Town Clerk  
R. Keith Powell, Chief of Police  
Greg Siler, Finance Director  
Stephen Wensman, Planning Director

Also Present

Bob Spence, Town Attorney  
Bill Dreitzler, Town Engineer

Administrative Staff Absent

**Call to Order**

Mayor Moore called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Councilman Wood made a motion, seconded by Councilman Scott, to approve the agenda as submitted. Unanimously approved.

**Closed Session Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (5)**

Councilman Barbour made a motion, seconded by Councilman Stevens, to enter into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (5) at 6:32 pm

**Reconvene In Open Session**

Councilman Scott made a motion, seconded by Councilman Stevens, to reconvene in open session. Unanimously approved at 7:14 pm.

**State Grant Requirements**

Town Manager Michael Scott informed the Council that the Town has received \$5.5 million in State grants. The CSX Culvert project was the only grant that was time sensitive because all funds must be spent by June 2023. The State informed staff the Town's conflict of interest policy needed to be updated.

Mayor Moore stated the conflict-of-interest policy template provided by the State does not apply to Municipalities. He further stated that he did not agree with the proposed policy.

Town Attorney Bob Spence responded the issue was the timeline of when the project needed to be completed and a policy was something the Town had to have to satisfy the State's grant requirements.

Mayor Moore stated he did not want to adopt a policy that was unclear.

Mr. Spence responded he had drafted a policy for the Town of Princeton which simply quoted the NC General Statutes. He stated the Town of Smithfield does not want to adopt a policy that conflicts with the NC General Statutes.

The Town Manager stated he was on a timeline with the grant and any delay could jeopardize the project.

Mayor Moore responded he had a lot of questions about the proposed policy. A conflict-of-interest policy needs to have clear language.

Councilman Scott made a motion, seconded by Councilman Wood, to table discussions of this matter until the March regular meeting. Unanimously approved.

**Police Department Expansion Project**

Town Manager Michael Scott informed the Council there has been an increase in the construction cost for the Police Department Expansion Project.

Town Engineer Bill Dreitzler explained he was not surprised by the price increase. The major increases are in building materials. Originally, \$784,571.73 was budgeted and it has increased to \$1,393,208.51. This is a common trend that does not seem to be decreasing anytime soon.

Councilman Barbour stated there was currently more demand than supply thus driving up the cost of materials. Within a number of years, the cost of the expansion will not be as valuable. Mr. Dreitzler responded he did not see a change in the ballooning construction cost.

Mayor Moore stated these were unprecedented times, but if we continued to pay these increased prices, there would never be a decrease in prices. Mr. Dreitzler responded the Town must balance the need for the project with the cost of the project.

Finance Director Greg Siler informed the Council that to secure these funds, the Town got approval through the Local Government Commission (LGC) to apply for a loan in the amount of \$780,000. Those funds immediately went into escrow. The bulk was still with the lender, but one loan payment has been made and another was due.

Councilman Barbour questioned the cost of the plans for the expansion of the building. Mr. Dreitzler responded \$128,000 was spent on the plans.

Councilman Barbour stated the plans were still valid and the Council should consider if they wished to move forward with this project.

Councilman Scott stated \$680,000 was needed in addition to what was already budgeted. He further stated this was initially approved because it was a necessary improvement.

Councilman Scott made a motion, seconded by Councilman Rabil, to move forward with the Police Department Expansion Project and discuss how to fund it.

Further discussion ensued prior to the vote.

Councilman Barbour questioned if this project could be delayed until a palatable economic situation occurred.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dunn stated he took a tour of the Police Department when he was elected 6.5 years ago, at that time, the building exceeded its capacity.

Mayor Pro-Tem Dunn stated on major issue was the evidence room had far exceeded its capacity. He questioned the amount of time evidence had to be kept. Chief Powell responded that evidence has to be kept nearly forever. He further stated that handling of evidence should be to priority and storage of that evidence is a concern.

Councilman Wood stated that while he did not want to spend more money on the project, he felt it was necessary. He stated the Town should not continue to wait until construction costs decrease.

Councilman Barbour questioned if Police Department staff could live without the expansion a little longer. Councilman Wood stated the Town is experiencing growth and this expansion was needed.

Mayor Moore stated that while the Town is experiencing growth, it has not realized the property tax gain. He asked if staff had looked at other options; such as, existing property that could be upfitted for the Police Department or where there existing buildings could be used for evidence storage. Chief Powell responded that evidence has to be secured and most agencies store their own evidence.

Mayor Moore asked if staff had investigated other options. Town Manager Michael Scott responded that he and Chief Powell looked at other potential properties before proposing the expansion of the existing building. None of those options were feasible or economical.

Councilman Barbour questioned if the \$1.4 million was a guaranteed cost. Mr. Dreitzler responded there was no guarantee, but it was the cost used for budgetary purposes.

Councilman Scott stated that with the increased cost, the Town was getting a better built structure. Town Manager Michael Scott responded the building would be a better construction.

Councilman Barbour stated that no one voted against the Police Department Expansion Project when it was initially proposed. His only concern was the increase in cost.

Councilman Scott questioned how the Town could pay for the increase in cost. Town Manager Michael Scott responded the Town could expand the loan, use General Fund fund balance or use ARPA funds for the \$680,000 needed.

At this time, Mayor Moore called for a vote of the motion previously made by Councilman Scott.

Councilman Scott made a motion, seconded by Councilman Rabil, to move forward with the Police Department Expansion Project and discuss how to fund it. Councilman Scott, Councilman Rabil, Mayor Pro-Tem Dunn, Councilman Stevens and Councilman Wood voted in favor of the motion. Councilman Barbour voted against the motion. Motion passed five to one.

Councilman Scott questioned if changing the term and the loan amount would delay the project.

Finance Director Greg Siler responded it would delay the project.

Councilman Barbour made a motion, seconded by Councilman Scott, to use ARPA funds to fund the difference of the project not to exceed \$690,000.

**FY 2022-2023 Budget Goals**

Town Manager Michael Scott stated he would like to have input from the Council on budget priorities. All Department Heads were present to answer any questions.

Councilman Barbour requested that the capital needs of each department be provided to the Council via email.

Councilman Scott stated Town employees were the Town's number one asset. He suggested reinstating the longevity compensation program. He stated the Town has to stay competitive and the employees needed to be valued. He explained that excessive turnover in employees, cost the Town a lot of money.

Councilman Scott further stated that Powell Bill funds did not cover the cost of needed street repairs. He suggested adding additional funding for street repairs.

Councilman Wood suggested that a more comprehensive salary study be completed. He further stated the Town needed to conduct an employee satisfaction survey.

**Adjourn**

Councilman Barbour made a motion, seconded by Councilman Wood, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:29 pm.

ATTEST  
  
Shannan L. Parrish, Town Clerk



  
M. Andy Moore, Mayor